

The Missouri Overweight and Obesity **Observer**

Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

A compilation of the latest news relating to overweight and obesity from around the state, nation and world.

October 2003

Stress can be eased by 'comfort' food, study confirms

A new study confirms what many Americans have known all along: Certain foods can "comfort" and make you feel better. The study, which is being reported in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, notes that comfort food applies the brakes on a key element of chronic stress. It helps explain why solace is often sought in food in response to stress, anxiety or depression. "In the short term, if you're chronically stressed it might be worth eating and sleeping a little more to calm down, perhaps at the expense of gaining a few pounds," says Norman Pecoraro, PhD. "But seeking a long-term solution in comfort foods – rather than fixing the source of the stress or your relationship to the source of the stress – is going to be bad for you."

For full story, go to: <http://www.nutritiongate.com/content/html/portal/news.htm?comm=portal&token=&newstype=latest#11555>

Dieting has opposite effects for teens trying to lose weight

Children and teenagers may experience the opposite results when they attempt to diet, according to a report in *USA Today*. They should not diet on their own because it may lead to binge eating and weight gain, pediatric experts are saying. Children and teens' eating and exercise habits were followed for three years by researchers at Harvard Medical School. Almost 15,000 girls and boys aged 9 to 14 were included in the study which revealed that excess weight gain is more common in those who diet than those who don't.

For full story, go to: http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2003-10-05-teen-diet_x.htm

Socioeconomic status plays role in childhood obesity

Socioeconomic influences appear to play a direct role in whether a child's genetic susceptibility to obesity is expressed or controlled, according to a recent Medical College of Georgia study. Researchers there studied the genotypes of almost 500 black and white American children, aged 5 to 25, and found those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were more likely to display the negative effects of genes that are known to be involved in causing obesity. The findings were to be presented recently at the American Physiological Society conference in Augusta, GA.

"Some gene effects were dependent on socioeconomic status," researcher and genetic epidemiologist Dr. Harold Snieder said. "If you are a carrier of the 'bad gene,' so to say, and you are also in a lower socioeconomic class, then you will show the effect of the gene and are obese. If you are in the middle or higher socioeconomic class, you don't show any effects of the gene. We don't know which part of the socioeconomic status is responsible for children being obese, but physical activity and diet are likely to play a role."

For the full story, go to: http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&u=/hsn/20031004/hl_hsn/socioeconomicsplaysroleinobesity

The diet wars go on and on...

Low fat, low carbohydrate, low calorie... take your pick. The plethora of new and different diets on the market today has prompted a diet war of sorts among weight-loss enthusiasts, according to a report at *MSNBC*. With more than two-thirds of all Americans overweight, it's no surprise that the popularity of commercial diet plans and weight-loss programs has soared in recent years. The government estimates that Americans spend an average of

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more than \$30 billion each year on weight-loss products and services. Commercial diet plans such as Atkins, The South Beach Diet, Weight Watchers, and others are gathering loyalists in different camps. "People feel committed and loyal to their diets because it helps them to stay on the diet," Lisa Dorfman, MS, RD, a spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association was quoted in the report. "If they didn't have that loyalty and commitment, they would doubt what they're doing in the first place."

For full story, go to: <http://www.msnbc.com/news/967621.asp>

Doctors, hospitals work to fill needs of the obese patients

"No room for the obese" seems to be a slogan for the entire American health care system, according to a recent article in the *Washington Post*. And this is no minor issue with nearly two-thirds of the population overweight or obese. According to the report, these are the very people who are likely to need health care the most since they have a substantially increased risk for illness and premature death. Studies have suggested the health system doesn't want to deal with them, or is out to humiliate them.

Obstacles which tend to keep the overweight away from medical care include items such as gowns that are too small; waiting room chairs they cannot squeeze into; scales placed in public view; exam tables that tip over; and procedures (such as pelvic exams) that turn embarrassing when extra staff is required to lift the patient's middle. Even more serious are MRI units too small to handle an obese patient. The article discusses how to improve the office space, armless seats, large speculums for gynecologic exams, a scale with a wide base located in a private area, and also encourages practitioners to display a better attitude when dealing with them. The in-depth report also notes that health care facilities are making efforts to accommodate large patients. These include double-size stretchers, extra-large wheelchairs and oversize gowns.

For full story, go to: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A49276-2003Sep22.html>

English parents urged to tackle kids' obesity

Faced with new findings that one in 10 English six-year-olds is obese, UK parents are being urged to pay more attention to their children's diets. The report, which came from the Health Development Agency, says that obesity in children is rising by nearly 1 per cent annually. At this rate, when the children reach the age of 15, nearly one in five is predicted to be obese. Professor Mike Kelly, director of research and information at the agency, added that there were no signs that the upward trend was slowing down. The study added that parents could be a major force in promoting healthy eating and challenging food advertising directed at children.

For the full story, go to: <http://www.nutraingredients.com/news/news.asp?id=789>

Physicians not immune from anti-fat bias, study finds

Although the level of bias is lower than in the general community, even health professionals specializing in obesity tend to be biased against overweight individuals, according to the results of a study published in the September issue of *Obesity Research*. Almost 400 health clinicians and researchers involved in the study tended to associate the stereotypes lazy, stupid, and worthless with obese people. Bias was less in older individuals, in men, in those working directly with obese patients, in those who felt they understood the experience of obesity, and in those who had obese friends.

For full story, go to: <http://www.obesityresearch.org/cgi/content/abstract/11/9/1033>

Parents to blame for childhood obesity, report says

Obesity experts say adults have to take responsibility for the deadly trend of childhood obesity in the U.S., according to an *ABC News* report. "It is child abuse, what we're doing with our kids," said Dr. Neil Barnard of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. Kids' habits are shaped by the adults in their lives, the report says.

For full story, go to: <http://abcnews.go.com/sections/living/US/childhoodobesity030930.html>